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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 009437

SIPDIS

NOFORN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KJUS](#) [PINR](#) [CO](#) [ELN](#)

SUBJECT: ELN WILLING TO TALK BUT NOT MUCH

REF: BOGOTA 8262

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Milton K. Drucker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) On September 6, the Central Command (COCE) of the National Liberation Army (ELN) formally responded to the GOC's August 3 communique reported reftel. The ELN's written response criticized the GOC for its delay in responding to the ELN's June 4 negotiating proposal and for failing to address the substance of the ELN's offer. Nevertheless, the COCE said it accepted the GOC's August 3 response as a positive sign of willingness to dialogue. The tone of the ELN's letter was cautious but civil and left the door open for further communication and continuing facilitation by the Government of Mexico.

2. (U) Begin unofficial translation:

Last August 3, we received your letter responding to the proposed humanitarian accord presented by the ELN on June 4. As you can see, the Government's response took two months, while this message only took one month, which means the ELN's speed of response is twice that of the Government.

But what most stands out in the Government response is that none of its seventeen paragraphs mention the ELN's June 4 proposal. It seems that the Government did not understand or intentionally ignored what we are proposing.

To not respond to an interlocutor's proposals or to dodge them can lead us into a dialogue of the deaf, which is not at all productive in building (mutual) confidence, so it is obvious we are speaking different languages. We have advanced a bit; at least we realize that we are speaking, even if we do not understand each other. In any case, despite the delay in the Government's response, we value it as a positive sign of interest in dialogue.

We deduce from the Government's proposal that we are very far apart. The Government maintains that all is well in the country, that with the Democratic Security Policy things will be even better, and that the solution to the social and armed conflict can be reduced to demobilization and disarmament. In the meantime, the guerrillas will declare a unilateral ceasefire to demonstrate they can stop "being terrorists," and if they stop kidnapping the Government can release some imprisoned guerrillas, that is, "if they do not misbehave again."

The country has spent more than 13 years reflecting on the situation and concluded that the armed conflict has deep social roots, that the State is primarily responsible for the chaos that Colombia is living through, and that as long as these causes are not overcome, it will be very difficult for a paradise of peace to reign on a boat that is adrift.

The Government has proposed that we cease kidnapping, to which the ELN says to the Government that it should turn over the thousands of "disappeareds", the State being primarily responsible for them. Of course we will have to address this issue, the ELN is aware of this, but while we take that large step, it would be better to decide on modest, realistic goals.

It is then a matter of clarifying our visions with respect to PEACE, and whether achieving peace requires social and political transformations that would make the use of arms unnecessary. It is critical to know whether the State is disposed to take such a track. We believe that the effort to clarify is assisted by the facilitation of Mexico, the Group of Friends and other national and international efforts.

The nation continues its path towards greater and greater polarization, increasingly as a result of hawkish policies and repressive actions against the population. If this bad environment does not change in favor of democracy and persecution does not end, the search for peace will be as futile as plowing the desert.

We would like to invite the Government to examine these proposals with more flexibility and that, with the goal of recreating initiatives, international facilitating bodies work to overcome current obstacles. To that end, we

reiterate that the ELN proposes to work towards a Humanitarian Accord whereby, in addition to reaching an agreement with the Colombian Government about the use of mines and explosives, we reach a General Amnesty for the Political Arrests and Prisoners of War, and a bilateral, temporary ceasefire. Agreements which together could open the way to the longed for political solution that all Colombians dream of.

When negotiating a deal, you cannot ask of the insurgency what the Government is not willing to take on) that is, the healthy principle of reciprocity.

Dare to think of peace, it is a notion shared by the people of the nation.
End text.

Mediation by Mexico

13. (C) On September 15, the Charge d'Affaires met with Ambassador Andres Valencia, the Government of Mexico's designated facilitator for GOC outreach to the ELN. Valencia said the generally respectful tone of the ELN's response -- particularly its failure to allude to the Colombian military's recent killings of three alleged ELN union activists in Arauca Department -- was encouraging. He admitted that the relatively positive tone surprised him, given the GOC's insistence in its August 3 letter on a unilateral ELN cease-fire before negotiations could begin. Valencia opined that if the GOC were to insist on such a hard-line precondition, it would essentially kill the process before it even begins. He admitted he is still struggling to understand both sides' bottom-line negotiating positions and demands, but said he believes that a degree of flexibility by the GOC will permit measurable progress over time. He asked the U.S. to urge the GOC to be more flexible in the discussion with the ELN.

14. (C) Valencia also noted the ELN, unlike the paramilitaries, is broke. They have no way of supporting themselves if they stop kidnapping and other illegal acts. Therefore, according to Valencia, in order for an ELN-ceasefire to be effective, the ELN will need some way of obtaining sustenance. In response to a Valencia idea, the Charge pointed out it was unreasonable to expect the GOC to feed the ELN during negotiations, but perhaps some outside group might think it appropriate. Nonetheless, he reminded Valencia that the ELN had been declared a terrorist organization by the United States and the EU countries. This would be a severe constraint on anyone trying to assist the ELN during negotiations.
DRUCKER